

RIAS

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THE SUCCESS OF AMERICAN RADIO stars may be measured by their Hooper ratings and their fan mail but staff members of *RIAS*,* the American radio station in Berlin, only need read the Communist press to see how they're doing.

"For years they ignored us," a *RIAS* official said, "and we didn't know they cared until they called us 'A paid, stinking news-ulcer owned by foreign monopoly capitalists and criminal warmongers in the heart of Europe.'"

It was the sweetest thing they could have said.

Born of conflict and nurtured on setbacks, hard work and danger, the *RIAS* staff had been building for the time when the station would be so effective in getting its story across that it would be considered a force for evil by the higher echelons in Eastern Germany.

They achieved this point early last spring when Soviet Zone officials, backed by the Communist-dominated press and radio, launched a campaign of bitter invective, rolling up their heavy propaganda guns to train them against *RIAS*, the Radio in the American Sector, the station which because of its unique position — 105 miles within the Soviet Zone border — has become the only powerful voice of truth behind the Iron Curtain.

"*RIAS* lie-factory," shrieked the Communist radio.

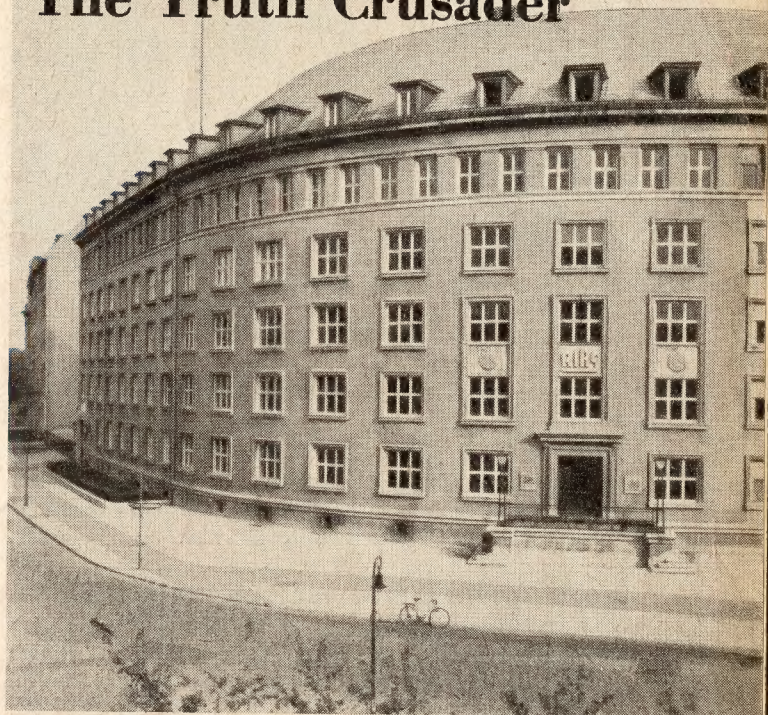
"Enemies of our people are spreading base calumnies through *RIAS* and other colonial transmitters," said the press.

"Do not listen to *RIAS*. Learn from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and study the decisions of our party," warned the irate, baffled Communist officials.

IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE of Thuringia an official of a Communist-puppet party was greeted with hoots when he extolled the Czech's "People's Democracy." "Don't laugh," he cried, "those who laugh are, in my opinion, those elements in our party who listen to *RIAS*."

* "*RIAS*" ("Rundfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor" — Radio in the American Sector) is operated by the Office of the US High Commissioner for Germany through the Radio Branch, Information Services Division, Office of Public Affairs.

The Truth Crusader



Headquarters of *RIAS* in the borough of Schoeneberg, in the US Sector of Berlin. (RIAS-Schulz photo)

On through the summer and into the fall the Communist anti-*RIAS* campaign has shown no sign of abatement. Accentuated by the last May 28 Whitsuntide-March-on-Berlin fiasco, the attacks grow sharper and the abuse more venomous.

How vitriolic can you get, the *RIAS* staff asked themselves, as the East zone press accused station personnel of stealing sacred ornaments from a Soviet Zone church.

The SED (East zone Communist Party) has resorted to new tricks in an attempt to discover those Soviet Zone residents who are listening to the station. When housewives appear to pay the regular radio license fees required in both East and West Germany, they are told that those who wish to listen to *RIAS* must pay an extra 50 pfennigs (about 12 cents). Many unsuspecting women have fallen for the stunt and are today bewailing their lack of sophistication.

Another unsophisticate — an employee of the Leipzig "Free Trade Stores" — was summarily dismissed for recommending a radio receiver to a customer as a set capable of receiving *RIAS*.

In other areas the SED has set up "agitation groups" against *RIAS* listeners. One SED state board admitted that "things have already gone so far that even party



RIAS makes political capital out of Communist-led "Free German Youth" rally in interviews during Whitsuntide gathering in former German capital. (RIAS/Rudolph photo)

functionaries regularly listen to *RIAS* and then take up themes used by *RIAS* for discussions in party meetings."

The state board has ordered its "agitation groups" to listen religiously to *RIAS* broadcasts so that they can spot by the trend of their discussions in local party meetings those unauthorized persons who also have been listeners.

MEANWHILE, THE SOVIET ZONE PRESS continues to do a top publicity job for the station. It is a rare day when the *Taegliche Rundschau*, the official Soviet Army German-language newspaper published in Berlin, does not mention *RIAS* in three or four stories while the Communist-dominated German press screams at its readers to avoid the pitfalls of objectivism which lie in wait for *RIAS* listeners.

But this spate of outrage had to be earned. Communists usually don't squander abuse on the ineffectual weapons of their enemies.

The violence heaped upon the station shows the East zone authorities' awareness of its force and of the fact that a large percentage of East Germany's population is listening in secret to the forbidden voice.

Communists have not forgotten that their loudly touted Free German Youth's Whitsuntide march on Berlin boomeranged because of *RIAS*' activities, which exposed the demonstration as a familiar regimentation of youth for totalitarian purposes. In angry retaliation, the Communists warned their people "*RIAS* is worse than poison gas" and East zone officials trained the young Blueshirts, as they swung past the Berlin reviewing stand of Communist bigwigs, to chant:

*Mag der RIAS noch so kleifen,
Wir gehen doch zum Deutschlandtreffen!*

Which *RIAS* staffers loosely translated as:

*In spite of RIAS' angry bark,
We still enjoy the Whitsun lark!*

THE UNDER-THE-BLANKET LISTENING, which is reaching the proportions of an all encompassing East zone hobby, is maintained only by the fact that today *RIAS* has established itself as a symbol of truth carrying the factual world-today story to the thousands who are fed up with distortions and lies.

But *RIAS* listening is a dangerous pastime in the East German police state. For this reason the nightly *RIAS* show produced especially for the Soviet Zone, "Berlin Speaks to the Zone," has been toned down in production and moderated to a placid pitch.

The *piece de resistance* of *RIAS*' twenty and one-half hours daily program fare, this broadcast was formerly aired with all the approved hoopla and fanfare that good sound effects can contrive.

Today, at the request of Eastern listeners themselves, the show has been toned down so that no loud or symbolic acoustic effects identify it to nosy neighbors.

Three times daily, six days a week, this 15-minute spot acquaints clandestine listeners with daily events in East Germany which Communist censorship has withheld and brings them vital information necessary in their struggle against totalitarianism. An anathema to Communist leaders, the program's famous "spy lists" bring froth to the lips of the party's faithful.

Soviet agents—butcher, baker or well-known university professor—known as Communist spies are named by the American station* and listeners are warned to avoid the spy in their midst lest he denounce them to the authorities for disciplinary action or a one-way ticket to the dreaded uranium mines in Eastern Germany.

NEATLY DRAWN WORD-PORTRAITS of public figures in Soviet Zone activities show East listeners the quality of the men being placed in high positions over the "People's Democracy."

* Also see "Fighters against Inhumanity" in Information Bulletin, October 1950 issue.

Listeners from Soviet Zone visit *RIAS*' Political Branch in search of assistance and advice. (RIAS photo)





"Berlin Speaks to the Zone" broadcasts warn East German listeners of spies in their midst. (RIAS/Burkhardt photo)

When Vincenz Mueller, former German general, was named as leader of the NDP (East zone political party serving as a catch-all for former Nazis), RIAS dug into the records and found a particularly unpleasant one attached to the general substantiating his reputation for ruthless and unscrupulous acts.

And, again, when Karl-Fritz Bernhardt, leader of the "Society for Soviet-German Friendship," was nominated to lead a discussion on the evils of RIAS, it was found that Bernhardt was a singularly unfortunate choice.

On the following evening's show to the Soviet Zone, RIAS featured a certified copy of Bernhardt's court record, the first chapter of which was written in 1922, containing his spaced-out convictions through the years for theft, libel, fraud, perjury and other offenses.

Reaction to the program has gratified the RIAS staff. Letters and telephone calls pour into the station begging for repeats on special shows and showering praise on the fillip RIAS is providing to resistance workers in the East.

THE MAJORITY OF THE APPROXIMATELY 130 letters a day received from East-Zone listeners are of necessity anonymous but often signed letters are given to friends traveling to Berlin for mailing in the safety of the Western sectors.

The following excerpts from representative letters received from Soviet Zone listeners indicate the tone of audience mail:

A Businessman — Your reports on the oppressed East zone are only too true. It is precisely because RIAS tells the truth about actual conditions that our miserable oppressors are brought to light.

From Saxony — You have become a first-class political power in our country. In the Cold War you are, if not an atom bomb, at least a guided missile

which takes effect somewhere beyond the range of vision.

From a Former Soviet Concentration Camp Inmate — You were among those who worked for us, who took up the cause of humanity and it is through your intensive co-operation that the light of a new day finds us free men again.

From "Listener YZX" — For us in the East zone, radio is the essential source of news. For us radio from the West is more than entertainment. It is a tie with the free world; it gives us the strength to hang on and the courage and material we need to work against the ever greater volume of propaganda for the Communist system. Unfortunately, it is not the German stations that help us. RIAS and London Radio are our main helpers. They are indispensable to us.

RIAS WARNED SOVIET ZONE listeners on June 29, 1950 that mills and grain storerooms would be subject to strict inspection the following morning. One listener wrote: "The announcement saved not only my father, but a number of others in the same business from having their mills closed or perhaps expropriated. What RIAS means to us business people in the Soviet Zone is something we only can judge."

Providing the satirical twist to humor so beloved by German audiences, the show for the Soviet Zone takes a lighter twist each Saturday when Comrade Otto Pieckewitz — the "200 percent Communist" clown — goes on the air to argue Communist ideology to its illogical conclusions.

RIAS dreamed up this now famous character to help East Germans laugh and he has proved so successful that when he was taken off the air last September, a stream of letters from the Soviet Zone insisted on the return of Pieckewitz, who is now a regular weekly feature.

Soviet Zone escapees—an attorney general and an assistant—are heard in RIAS interview. (RIAS/Rudolph photo)





Music-loving Germans fill Berlin's Titania Palast to hear RIAS' symphony orchestra. (RIAS/Rudolph photo)

Crowds rally from both sides of French-Soviet sector border when RIAS sound truck appears. (RIAS/Rudolph photo)



Floods of letters from East zone send information and thanks for RIAS broadcasts. (RIAS/Rudolph photo)



RIAS actors display outstanding talent in a satirical play which spoofs Soviet Zone politicians. (PRD HICOG photo)

Youngsters take to the airwaves in their own show, RIAS' "Kinderfunk" (children's broadcast). (RIAS/Rudolph photo)



When the Communists accused the United States of dropping potato bugs from airplanes to destroy the East German potato crop, Pieckewitz was appointed "Special People's Controller for the Liquidation of the Imperialistic Potato Bug." To the delight of East listeners, the stodgy Pieckewitz spumed over the seditious joke being circulated in the Russian zone that the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was petitioning to have potatoes dropped on the East zone so that the bugs would have something to eat.

No Communist slogan is too obtuse for Pieckewitz to explain as he burlesques the Communist credo. His explanation of the Soviet Zone import-export program is worthy of a Russian economist: "We sell bricks to Italy in exchange for lemons. The lemons go to Denmark for butter. We trade the butter to Sweden for steel. We send the steel to Russia in exchange for clay which we use to manufacture more bricks for Italy..."

The pompous Pieckewitz, gulping "socialized aspirin tablets" at every setback to the Communist cause, has won the hearts of his listeners. As the typical Communist petty official, the self-important, sluggish-witted Pieckewitz is a natural for ridicule—and no matter how heavily it is spread the German audience loves it.

BUT IT IS THE STRAIGHT news broadcasts that American authorities credit as the most powerful programs for building up the vast listening audience which *RIAS* boasts today.

Under years of the Hitler imposed news blackout and the ensuing Soviet clamp-down, the people of Eastern Germany for the first time in 17 years are today learning the facts behind what their neighbors are doing and thinking.

Tying in closely with President Truman's truth campaign to the uninformed peoples of the Iron Curtain countries, *RIAS* is taking the place of a local free press and is carrying objective world and domestic news into the homes of the news-hungry people of Eastern Germany.

Especially designed Soviet Zone programs feature stories deliberately omitted from the Eastern press—news on Western developments in the world picture, glimpses into the free world press and editorial comment from Atlantic Pact nations.

Putting over its important product, *RIAS* is following accepted radio techniques in casting out the bait of excellent entertainment, good dance bands, dramatic shows and sports to snare its prospective customers into the *RIAS* listening habit.

Berlin bobbysoxers—once grist for the Hitler Youth mill—are now getting joy through bebop as they tune into *RIAS* jam sessions while West Berlin schools are hooked into a *RIAS* radio school of the air which departs from many formalized educational methods.

Americanizations have gone over with Berlin listeners to such a degree that among the most popular daytime programs is a strictly US-style soap opera depicting the fortunes and adversities of a typical Berlin family and their daily coping with existence in the four-sector city.



"Mach Mit" (Join with Me) broadcast aids returnees from Soviet Zone concentration camps. (DPA photo)

AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR INTERNATIONALISM, the station is acquainting German audiences with cultural life in the United States as well as political thought through two *Voice of America* broadcasts relayed daily, while a bi-weekly ECA show points up the varied cultures of Germany's neighbors who are participating in the European Recovery Program.

In its zeal for entertainment, *RIAS* maintains strong emphasis on broadcasting public service features. Youth programs stress understanding of civic institutions; Berlin's city council is given regular air time in an effort to promote Berliners' interest in their government, while the city's welfare funds are swelled by the proceeds from special shows staged by *RIAS* for this purpose.

For *RIAS* not only serves as a symbol of hope for the Eastern zone but also as the community station for western Berliners and in this role must prepare its programs for public service.

Among the innovations used by the station to increase its effectiveness during the past year was the development of a telephone news service providing a three-minute newscast to anyone in Greater Berlin dialing No. 23. During July, telephone officials reported that since the outbreak of the Korean conflict the number of calls placed daily for the *RIAS* telephone newscast had jumped from 12,000 to 18,000—more than half of them originating from the Soviet Sector of Berlin.

GRADUALLY AND ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY over the years, *RIAS* has weaned its listeners from the Communist-controlled Radio Berlin until today's latest surveys show that 98 percent of the West Berlin radio audience is listening to the American station.

And the Communist station, itself, has done its part in helping *RIAS*' steadily gaining popularity. At one time possessors of the best dance orchestra in all Germany, Radio Berlin handed their listeners over to *RIAS* on a



Station carries address delivered by Gen. Lucius D. Clay, former military governor of Germany and principal speaker, at Freedom Bell dedication in Berlin Oct 24. At left is US High Commissioner McCloy. (PRB HICOG-BE photo)

silver platter when they decreed that "Anglo-Saxon jazz" was decadent and banned 40 popular tunes, such as the American favorites "Over the Rainbow" and "Ghost Riders of the Sky," as reeking with monopolistic capitalism. Fed up, the whole Radio Berlin orchestra walked out on the Communists.

Seizing the opportunity, the RIAS staff built an entire program around the 40 songs. The broadcast, called "Forbidden Fruit," gained wide popularity and many listeners, among whom the youthful Communists who marched on Berlin were the most ardent.

In fact, RIAS, which has far outstripped Radio Berlin in popularity and whose far-reaching voice is now grating so harshly on the sensitive ear of the Communist hierarchy, is really the Soviet's baby.

BORN OUT OF RUSSIAN intransigence, RIAS came into being in the early part of the experiment in four-power occupation of Germany. By the time the Western Allies reached Berlin in mid-1945, the Russians had the city's powerful broadcasting station, Radio Berlin, in full operation under their own political direction and were sitting tight.

Repeated Allied attempts to bring the station under multipartite control led absolutely nowhere and while the Soviets sat long and late, politely listening to American, British and French objections, they continued their unilateral control of Radio Berlin.

When it became apparent that the Soviets had no intention of relinquishing any part of their complete control over the city station, ex-New York newspaper man Charles S. Lewis, chief of Information Services Division's Radio Branch and the one man who has guided RIAS' progress from its fitful infancy to its coming of age, went to US zonal headquarters and advised the setting up of an independent US radio station in Berlin.

Living in those dream days of early Allied Control Authority sweetness and light, officials at headquarters

thought Mr. Lewis was out of step but none the less on his recommendation they agreed to open a US station on a small, but not directly competitive, scale.

But the operation of a new station meant that the handful of Information Services Division radio personnel had to begin operations in Berlin from the ground up.

Quarters were wangled in a bomb-damaged wing of the Berlin Telephone Exchange, additional personnel were snatched from other American offices, and two studios were constructed out of odds and ends of American equipment and any German equipment on which the ISD radio boys could lay their hands.

THE *DRAHTFUNK* (WIRED RADIO) system of transmission had been used extensively by the Germans during the war as a means of broadcasting during air raids when the German radio stations went off the air to avoid providing beams into Berlin for Allied bombers.

Using this *Drahtfunk* method of long-wave transmission over telephone lines the station began operation Feb. 7, 1946, as the *Drahtfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor*, with programs daily from 5 p.m. to midnight.

Technically the results were not good. Reception was bad and the station was reaching only those in the British and US Sectors while the rest of the sprawling city was getting only Soviet-slanted news and Communist indoctrination.

Still pressing for quadripartite control of Radio Berlin on various levels in the Allied Control Authority, US authorities warned that the Soviet attitude was forcing the Americans to bring in a transmitter and broadcast to the entire population of the city.

But even in the face of this advance warning, the short-sighted Russian Bear only hugged Radio Berlin in a closer embrace, and, finally, the Americans moved into Berlin from Frankfurt a mobile 1,000-watt transmitter which went on the air in September 1946. With the new transmitter the program schedule was expanded and the station went on the air as a full-fledged radio station rechristened RIAS, call letters for *Rundfunk im Amerikanischen Sektor* (Radio in American Sector).

RIAS, HOWEVER, HAD an unhealthy infancy. The technical service of the station remained inadequate, the weak transmitter was still not reaching the listeners ISD had hoped to gain and increased power was prescribed for the faltering patient.

A 2,500-watt German transmitter installed late in 1946 gave way in turn to a captured German army transmitter of 20,000 watts by the spring of 1947 and Berliners felt that RIAS was there to stay.

Two months after the installation of the 20,000 watt transmitter, a public opinion survey conducted in the Western sectors of Berlin showed that RIAS' popularity had jumped 100 percent to an equal footing with the recalcitrant Soviet station, each having 34 percent of the city's radio audience.

Meanwhile RIAS was fast outgrowing its original quarters in the wing of the Telephone Exchange Building.

Months of house-hunting produced a bomb-shattered building large enough to shelter the expanding operation and reconstruction was started at once. Scarcities of tools and materials, however, continually sabotaged the pace of the rebuilding to the point where it almost seemed that for want of a nail a vital link in US information media in Germany would be lost.

The Soviet blockade of the city and the resulting shortages slowed reconstruction to tortoise speed and the new building was not officially opened until July 1, 1948.

By this time *RIAS* was in big-time operation but its staff was still having its headaches. The extremely heavy use of the 20,000-watt transmitter was causing frequent breakdowns in the old and oft-repaired equipment.

AS THE BLOCKADE DREW to a close, *RIAS* had proved its potential value as the spearhead of the American information campaign to pierce the rigid walls of the Iron Curtain countries.

Throughout that period, *RIAS*, on the air 24 hours a day to provide a homing beacon for the pilots carrying supplies to the besieged city, had supplied the democratic elements in Berlin with a voice powerful enough to keep up the spirits and hopes of the vast majority of German citizens who were opposed to a new dictatorship.

When West Berliners planned a protest meeting on Sept. 9, 1948, and wanted sympathizers to gather before the ruins of the old Reichstag building to voice their condemnation of the Soviet blockade and the attempt to implant a totalitarian regime, *RIAS* spread news of the meeting throughout the city. Within a few hours of the idea, the city was rallying to the call broadcast by the station and 250,000 persons, workers, men and women — outraged and angry — dropped their work and rushed to the meeting determined to make their voices heard.

With the end of the blockade American authorities felt it was now time to give a stellar role to *RIAS* in the all-important East-West drama being staged in the politically sliced-up city.

A powerful, modern 100,000-watt German transmitter was purchased for *RIAS*, placing the station on a par with all the powerful European medium-wave transmitters and vastly improved the reception of Eastern

Monitors take notes on newcasts from capitals throughout Europe, cover both East and West. (PRD HICOG photo)



In early days, RIAS mikes record Russian celebration at Soviet war memorial near Brandenburg Gate. (RIAS photo)

Germany with its 18,000,000 population. Because of frequency difficulties, *RIAS'* range was restricted until March 15, 1950, when, operating on a new and favorable frequency, it became audible throughout Europe at night.

SWINGING INTO ITS STRONGER political stride, the station stepped up its programming to a sustained intensive pitch. East Communists began warning Germans to cease listening to "the warmongers' radio."

The barbed comments from the East grew more venomous as veteran radio man Fred G. Taylor was called up to Berlin from his job as chief of Radio Stuttgart to head the propaganda-packing station and to supervise the efforts of the two other American radio specialists and the 700 German employees.

In a job loaded with political dynamite, a cool head and temperate judgment were needed as well as punch and drive. Mr. Taylor's level thinking coupled with unusual executive ability has lent considerable ballast to the highly-charged emergencies the staff has been called upon to meet. A Mormon missionary in Germany after the first World War, the new chief has a knowledge of the language and people which is essential in his sensitive job.

Another veteran, ex-commercial radio man Gordon Ewing, was brought in as deputy director and political chief to tighten up the political line and map out hard-hitting information campaigns for Soviet Zone listeners.

"Kip" Chevalier, programming and production specialist, joined the staff to spark the American direction.



On-the-spot RIAS newscasters describe outstanding events of the day as they happen.
(RIAS/Rudolph photo)

A DAILY EDITORIAL MEETING attended by both American and German staffers establishes the political work-load for the day. Domestic politics and economic trends are carefully sifted, special events broadcasts outlined, and commentaries and other political features shaped up. Representatives from the program department co-ordinate their output with those from the political department. Weekly, the same staff members get together to discuss the broader political and long-range program planning.

And once a day the political chief goes to HICOG's Berlin headquarters for a "Cold War" meeting where the latest information from Washington and from both Western and Eastern Germany is discussed.

In continuous touch with East Zone developments, RIAS leans heavily on its friends from the East for up-to-the-minute information.

Hundreds of visitors daily swarm the anterooms of RIAS' offices. Soviet Zone fans, listeners, well-wishers, the plain curious, as well as obviously East police-state spies, line the hallways.

Interviewees are vetted by experienced personnel who have learned to separate the friend from those sent purposely by Communist authorities to spy upon RIAS activities or upon fellow-East zoners who are in touch with the station.

In the Communist youth Whitsunday march on the city, more than 2,500 young members of the so-called Free German Youth deserted their units to visit RIAS' studios.

Rising to the occasion, RIAS presented 31 special broadcasts covering the Whitsun march and interviewed approximately 2,430 German youth and East zone police who came of their own accord to see the station and to talk politics with staff members.

For the young East zoners, RIAS arranged six public concerts and variety shows and invited them to a huge gala performance in the city's large Titania Palast theater. More than 1,800 young zealots sneaked into West Berlin for the show. Boys and girls of all ages poured into the theater early in the evening, and remained to cheer jazz tunes and Western jokes enthusiastically. The station offered them prizes — shoes, shirts, candy — which were promptly taken away from them by East German police when they returned to the Russian zone.

THIS, THEN, IS RIAS: The radio station which is known as a symbol of truth to those who live behind the veil of censorship.

And it is this truth at which the Communists jib when they wrathfully cry out that the Soviets should take action against RIAS as a dangerous enemy of the "People's Democracy."

They are bearing out the words of President Truman, who said: "The free nations of the world have a great advantage in that truth is on their side. Communist leaders have repeatedly demonstrated that they fear the truth more than any weapon at our command." +END



Cartooned Stalin frowns on Political Branch editor culling news from Soviet newspaper.
(RIAS photo)

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